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# WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

By C. B. KEENLEYSIDE

Author of "The Upper and the Nether Springs," "Enoch Walked with God,"  
"On the Banks of the Besor," and "The Unseen."

# WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

BY

C. B. KEENLEYSIDE, B.A., B.D.

Author of "The Upper and the Nether Springs," "Enoch Walked  
with God," "On the Banks of the Besor," etc.

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# WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

*James 4 : 14.*

## I.

Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies,  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand.  
Little flower, but if I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.

Tennyson.

Many have been the attempts to find out what life is; but life eludes discovery. It cannot be weighed nor measured; it cannot be seen nor heard; no knife is keen enough to lay it bare no grappling-hook strong enough to grasp it; iron bars and stone walls do not confine it; no microscope is fine enough, and no telescope powerful enough to expose it—life defies detection. It never has and probably never shall be caught and brought to view. It is as great a mystery to-day as when Adam, looking out through the dawn in Eden, wondered what it was all about.

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Nevertheless, many attempts have been made to define life; but they have all failed as fail they must, for how can one define the unknown?

It may be interesting to look at a couple of these definitions that do not define.

One wise man says: "Life is the sum of those forces which tend to resist death." This has an easy, matter-of-fact air, and sounds as plausible as the assertion that two and two make four. But after all it does not tell what life is; it only tells what life does. Besides, if the resistance of death constitutes life, we should know what death is.

Another definition runs: "Life is that force which keeps the organism in correspondence with its environments." This has the advantage of high-sounding terms from foreign tongues, but again tells only what life does, and in no wise what life is.

Science has failed to discover and philosophy has failed to define life.

Suppose we turn from them to the street, and ask at haphazard the first half-dozen men or women we meet.

"Life? Why, life is having a jolly good time," says the club man. To him Browning makes answer:

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"Poor vaunt of life indeed,  
Were man but formed to feed  
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast.  
Such feasting ended then  
As sure an end to man."

"Life? Oh, life is making money," says another, who is not mindful of the Master's words, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." To-day—in the year of our Lord 1904—as in Paul's day: "They that are mindful to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10.

"Life? I find life a bore and not worth living," said a society woman to the writer not long since. Surely, surely, for an immortal soul cannot be fed on the sham and the trivial and be satisfied. To her Paul thus makes reply: "She that giveth herself to pleasure is dead while she liveth." 1 Tim. 5: 6.

"Life? Why, life is to get out with the boys," says one whose eyes are fixed on the things that are seen, regardless of the Great Unseen.

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"Life? Why, life is power," answers the politician. He is of the class who has besmirched our land in the mire.

But yonder is a man with bent frame, lame of leg, scarred back, flashing eye, and radiant face. Let us ask him. To our question he replies in words of deathless meaning: "To me—to live is Christ."

Ah, thrice happy he who can say with the man of Tarsus: "To me—to live is Christ."

He only has solved the problem of existence.

If definitions fail us, what can we know of life? Much in many ways. Experience, observation, history and the scriptures all teach us lessons of great moment.

The first thing of which we are sure is its brevity.

## What is your Life?

### II.

#### LIFE IS SHORT.

A shaft from Nature's quiver cast  
Into the future from the past,  
Between the cradle and the shroud  
A meteor's flight from cloud to cloud.

—Whittier.

The last words of Cecil Rhodes: "So much to do, so little done," have been voiced by every son of Adam who has become aroused to the vastness of life and its brevity.

Yesterday we were children, to-day we are men, to-morrow—well, to-morrow we shall be with God.

We hurry through our years ever longing for the future when we are to be happy. Some day in the mirror we see a streak of white in our hair, and learn to our dismay that grey hairs have begun. Perhaps we pull out the first one we see—the writer did. But that does not help matters. It cannot stop the flight of time, nor stay the turning color. One of the events most likely to set us thinking is the discovery of our first grey hair. It is a notice served on us by nature that we are not immortal. It is a hint from God that we are to meet Him. It shows that death and decay have begun. It is the beginning of the end.

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The writer was talking one day to an aged friend about another man, and asked how old the man in question was. He of the hoary locks replied: "Oh, he is a man in middle life. About your age."

In middle life!

Why, I was only beginning—surely I had not reached the middle. It could not be—and yet it was. Prodigal of our years, we awake midway in the journey with nothing done. We are only getting ready to start, when lo! the clock strikes noon.

Coming in on the fast express the other night, the air-brakes were suddenly applied, and the train came almost to a stop. While the writer was wondering at it, a railway man across the aisle said as he looked at his watch and then out into the night: "The driver is slowing down for time." He had been running too fast, and had to wait till time caught up. Perhaps you can see Father Time, lame of leg, hobbling down the track with his scythe and hour-glass, striving to come up with the train. Perhaps so; but with us it is the reverse of this. We do not need to slow down for time, but rather to open the throttle wide, scatter sand on the rails, and carry all possible steam, that we may by all means keep pace with the flying moments.

Some people seek one thing and some another to

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help them, as they say, "to pass the time." Certain books are recommended, and some entertainments advertised for this very purpose, to help people pass the time.

God help the men and women to whom life means no more than this!

Pass the time!

No, no; stop it!

Stop it, until we accomplish something. Stop it, at least until we tell the children about Jesus and urge them to buy up the moments, for the days are evil. Stop it, until we tell the young that life is short, that time is its warp and woof, and that not a shred of it should be wasted. Stop it, until the thousand million who are perishing without Christ are told of His love and offered eternal life in His Name.

Oh, that the sun would stand still, as it did over the plains of Gibeon, until the enemies of the Lord are scattered, until the forces of hell and darkness are driven back, until the bar, the brothel, the bucket-shop, the caucus, the club and the gamblers' den be no more; and the world, cleansed, redeemed, clothed and in its right mind, sits at the feet of Jesus.

Life is too short to waste.

William Ewart Gladstone, one of the giants of our

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day, said: "Thrift of time will repay you in after years with an usury of profit beyond your most sanguine dreams, while the waste of it will cause you to dwindle alike in intellectual and moral stature beyond your darkest reckoning."

The scriptures ransack all nature to find fitting symbols with which to teach us the fleeting character of life.

James in his letter says (4: 4): "Life is a vapor appearing for a moment and vanishing away." Now the vapor is but the condensation into visible form of the moisture which is everywhere in the air.

Perhaps no more unsubstantial thing is known in nature. With certain conditions unfavorable to vapor it instantly vanishes. We can watch it disappearing as it melts back into the air.

As the vapor so your life, unsubstantial, evanescent, appearing for a moment and then vanishing away.

The writer of the Nineteenth Psalm says: "We bring our years to an end as a sigh." Nothing is much briefer or has less substance than a sigh.

He says again that we are like grass, in the morning flourishing, and at evening cut down and withering.

Hezekiah says that life is like a shepherd's tent.

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Living a nomadic life, here to-day, gone to-morrow, the shepherds had tents that were light and frail, and they were no sooner pitched than struck. Many a time had he seen the sun set behind the hills dotted with these fleeting habitations, and in the morning the deserted slopes would speak eloquently to him of life, which appeareth and vanisheth as a shepherd's tent.

Job takes up the tale, and says that life is swifter than a weaver's shuttle. Swifter than a shuttle! Take out the slide of your sewing machine and work the pedal, and watch the flying shuttle. Swift though it travels, life goes swifter.

He says in another place that life is swifter than a post, and passeth away as a swift ship, and goes with the speed of an eagle swooping on its prey.

"Our days upon the earth," he says, "are a shadow."

In Psalm 39 we are told that life is a handbreadth, and as nothing before God.

Jesus compares life to a day, when He says: "We must work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

And such is human life; so gliding on,  
It glimmers like a meteor and is gone.

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### **III.**

#### **LIFE IS UNCERTAIN.**

**"Ye know not the day nor the hour."**

Life is brief—whether we live ten or ten times ten years—but if it were only certain, so that we would know of a surety the measure of its brevity, then we would have some definite knowledge on which to base our hopes and lay our plans. But when to its brevity is added uncertainty, then indeed we are in a strait.

On Queen's Avenue in London not many months ago two men were discussing a matter of interest. One was in the full prime of his manhood—athletic, robust and virile. The other had been ill for years, and had been told not long before that he had but a slight chance of recovery. They parted, and before the sun went down the next day the strong man was carried to his home lifeless. He had fallen dead in the midst of his friends. The other man, whose life seemed to hang by a thread, lives yet to praise his Maker, and it is he who writes these lines.

The strength of the strong man counted for nought before a stronger than he. "Watch, therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour."

You strong men who read these lines, do not allow

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your robust health to lure into fancied security. You have no more certain tenure of this clay than the weakest man who breathes. If your soul has not found its quest, if the blood of Jesus has not cleansed you from sin, do not let this night's sun go down until you seek Him with your whole heart. To-morrow's sun shall rise—but you may not.

You are playing with the only wealth you have—your soul. And he against whom you are playing always wins. Baffle him never so often, death is the final victor. He may win to-night, or he may not win for years, but win he must.

The Rev. Daniel Baker illustrates your case something like this:

“Imagine a vessel sailing upon the ocean. It is a beautiful sunshiny day. The wind is just kissing the tops of the little dancing wavelets. By the railing of the vessel stands a man with a precious stone in his hand. He tosses it up, it sparkles in the air, and he catches it as it falls. Again and again he repeats the performance, till a stranger steps up, and says to him: ‘I beg your pardon, but will you tell me what it is you are throwing up?’ ‘A diamond,’ replies the man; ‘it represents all I possess. I am going to a new country, so I invested all my money in this jewel

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to make it portable.' 'Don't you think you are very careless, throwing it up like that? Suppose you should lose it?' 'Oh, there is no risk,' replies the man; 'haven't you seen me doing it for the last half hour?' He tosses it in the air again. The stranger watches it as it rises, sparkles in the light, and falls back safely into its owner's hand. Again it is tossed up, sparkles and is safely caught. Again and again he does it. At last he tosses it up, it sparkles as it falls, but it is too far out. The man reaches away over the rail of the vessel—but he cannot reach it. There is a splash in the water, and the diamond sinks out of sight. The man cries, 'Lost, lost, all I have is lost!'

"Ah, you say, that story is surely not true. No man would be such a fool as to play with a diamond like that. That story is true, and you are the man. That ocean is Eternity—that vessel Life—the one with the jewel you—the diamond your soul. Oh, how you trifle with it. Oh, what risk you take with it. Oh, how carelessly you toss it again and again and again. And I lay my hand upon your shoulder to-night and say, 'My friend, don't you think you are running a great risk?' 'No, no,' you say, 'I have been doing this for years. Just watch.' And again you throw it up, and again it falls safely into your ' and. Again

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and again you do it, and once more—perhaps to-night—you hurl it up. You watch to see it fall. And it is too far out now. There is a splash—that soul of yours sinks, not into the bottomless ocean, but into the bottomless pit, and you cry, ‘Lost—lost—lost—my soul is lost!’ Ah, friends, put your soul, that precious jewel, where it will be safe—put it in the keeping of Jesus Christ to-night.’ ”

How trite it sounds. Life is uncertain. It is so trite that one feels almost like apologizing to an intelligent reader for stating it. And yet because it is so trite we overlook it. We live as though we were immortal. And it is not for want of notices.

Not long ago a young lady called at my office about five o'clock in the afternoon. She was overflowing with life and buoyancy. An hour later she was overtaken by a terrible disaster, and at two the next day she went to be forever with the Lord. Looking forward to long years of usefulness, she was cut off in an instant. But to her, sudden death was sudden glory, for in early years she had confided her all to Jesus, and Jesus kept the trust. I shall never forget the testimony she gave in the midnight, nor the tone of triumph in which she said, while racked with pain, “I am not afraid to die, I am ready to go if God wants me.”

## What to your Life?

Are you ready?

Some years ago a Christian worker in Toronto decided to give up his business so as to devote his entire time to the service of the Master. All the details were completed, and the very day on which he was to sign the papers and complete the sale, death suddenly touched him with its mysterious finger, and bade him follow.

Well for him that he had not waited until free from business cares before tilling his field in the Master's vineyard.

"We must work while it is day—for the night cometh when no man can work."

The night cometh—yes, earthly night—but to the redeemed ones heavenly dawn.

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### VI.

#### LIFE IS IRREVOCABLE.

Backward, turn backward, O Time, in your flight;  
Make me a boy again—just for to-night.

---

Thou unrelenting Past!  
Strong are the barriers round thy dark domain,  
And fetters, sure and fast,  
Held all that enter thy unbreathing reign.

Childhood with all its mirth,  
Youth, Manhood, Age, that draws us to the ground,  
And last, man's life on earth,  
Glide to thy dim domains, and are bound.

—Bryant.

The uncertainty of life refers only to its duration. There is no uncertainty as to the fact that when it passes it passes beyond recall. Every day of every year we have lived has its tale recorded. Each moment of each hour adds its quota. No power on earth or in heaven can alter or recall the slightest act once done.

The record of the years and the moments stand changeless, indelible, irrevocable. Not God Himself can alter the past.

That day you fell into sin and defiled the white of your soul and rubbed the bloom from your conscience—there it stands. What would you give to forget,

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erase or recall it? Multiply your offer by infinity, add yet another infinity and your offer is vain. Clear to the end of an endless eternity it will stand without the faintest shadow of change. What kind of a record are the flying moments bearing for you into eternity?

And oh, how the years pile up. They used to creep, then walk, but now they run. The future is crowding upon us faster than we can take care of it, or improve its moments. And that word moment, how significant it is. We can only live "moment by moment." Now the word moment is an Anglo-Saxon word from the same root as the word "move," and means literally "that which moves over," or "the moving over." That is to say that we just live in that which moves over from the future to the past. That is our whole life—just that. We live in the moving, in the moment. While you are reading these words life is moving, and the future is hurrying through the present into the past, never to return.

The word we might have said but did not can never be said now; the deed we intended to do but did not remains undone forever.

There came a whisper in the night,  
A little cry across the years,  
And I who heard, in deep affright,  
Awakened with unnumbered fears.

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"It is some deed that I have done,  
Some sin I wrought, long, long ago;  
But hush! am I the only one?  
Then wherefore am I troubled so?

"For all men do some evil deed,  
And all men falter—some men fall;  
Do ghosts of Selfishness and Greed  
Come back, O God, to haunt them all?

"Mayhap some waywardness was mine  
In vanished days; mayhap I fell.  
Must I now drink the bitter brine—  
Must I see eyes that gleam from hell?"

Then came a whisper through the night,  
A little cry across the years,  
And I who heard, in deep affright,  
Listened with wild, unnumbered fears.

"I am the ghost of that pure deed  
You might have done, but did not do;  
I am the ghost of that good seed  
You might have sown when Life was new.

"And this it is that haunts you now—  
That deed undone, that seed unsown;  
Too late, too late, to take the plow,  
The Spring is gone, the May is flown!"

And this I heard amid the night—  
This voice that called across the years;  
And when the dawn came, silver white,  
I was companioned with my tears.

No second chance to spend to-day rightly. It is  
spent and spent forever when yonder sun goes down

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beyond the western hills. The sun will rise again, you say. Yes, it will rise again—but not to-day. To-day is history, and history is irrevocable.

So here hath been dawning  
Another blue day;  
Think, wilt thou let it  
Slip useless away?  
Out of eternity  
This new day is born,  
Into eternity  
At night will return.

Some say we will have other chances in other worlds. With the men who hold this view the writer has no controversy. Their controversy is with the scriptures. But suppose other chances were granted—what good would it do? Is a man more susceptible to good influences at fifty than he is at twenty? Surely not. He becomes hardened and indifferent, and the likelihood of his turning to God is very much lessened. If he is less likely to turn at fifty than at twenty, what shall we say about one hundred, two hundred, five hundred, one thousand, ten thousand, or a million years? Do not be deceived. You have your chance, you know the way, the burden is now upon you, walk in the way of light—and remember that as a tree falleth so shall it lie, and there is a great gulf fixed so that they who would pass over cannot.

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In 2 Samuel 14: 14 the writer says: "We are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again."

Could there be a more striking symbol of the irrevocableness of life? Water spilt on the ground. Try it. Throw out a glass of water on the ground and gather it up again if you can. Just as well try to gather up again the moments of this day whether well or ill spent.

The writer of the 78th Psalm, verse 39, says we are as "a wind that passeth away and cometh not again."

When you can call back the wind that shook the forests or even the breeze that fanned your cheek, then may you hope to bring back the dawn of this day.

"One life; a little gem of time between two eternities; no second chance to us for evermore."

"And so our lives glide on, the river ends we don't know where, and the sea begins, and then there is no more jumping ashore."

There is a time, we know not when,  
A point we know not where,  
That marks the destiny of men,  
To glory or despair.

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### V.

#### LIFE IS PREGNANT.

"A sacred burden is this life ye bare."

Be strong!

We are not here to play, to dream, to drift;

We have hard work to do, and loads to lift.

Shun not the struggle; face it, 'tis God's gift.

"There is not an hour of life but is trembling with destinies." Brief and uncertain though our tenure is, interests that are eternal hang upon our stay. Each one of us shall give an account of himself to God, and we shall be judged by the deeds done in the body. As a tree falleth so shall it lie.

We say life is brief. Life is not brief. Life is eternal. Ah, what a dignity it adds to the fleeting days. They shall never end. Men talk of this life and the other life. There is no other life—it is all one. Eternity has commenced. We are on its tide, in the sweep of its æons. We do not go from time to eternity. We are already and always have been in eternity.

The plain fact is, we shall live forever. Please lay down these pages and think of that: "We shall live forever." If any man who is not a Christian will give

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ten minutes a day to honest, sincere thought on eternity, the probabilities are that before a week is out he will cry with the jailor of Philippi: "What must I do?" The trouble is we do not think.

Yes, we shall live forever. And the life yonder beyond the tomb will depend upon our life here. This gives the rushing moments dignity and importance. In a brief tale of fourscore years, or half, or quarter of that number, we fix forever our destiny.

Notwithstanding George Eliot's sneers, "other-worldliness" is and always will be a great factor in life. We are citizens of heaven—and but pilgrims on earth. Heaven is our native land. What traveller upon a foreign soil does not turn his thoughts lovingly towards home, and conduct himself as becoming a citizen of a country he loves and honors? And shall we, the citizens of heaven, children of the King of that country, not rejoice in our native land and square our lives to its great laws?

The world to come settles also the problem of evil. It is the other part of the equation. It solves the enigma of this world, throws light on many dark parts and puts hope into the hopeless. It squares accounts, and death is but the clearing house.

And furthermore, life is pregnant in opportunity

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and in rewards. He lives longest who lives the most.  
Years are not the measure of life.

"Methuseiah lived," and this beside,  
"Nine hundred years and sixty-nine;  
Had sons and daughters, and he died."  
The record adds no other line.

Like some huge saurian on the strand  
Or some far-off, oblivious shore,  
He left these tracks upon the sand  
Of his long wanderings—nothing more.

But three years, near another sea,  
One walked whose steps mark every shore;  
He died, the Man of Galilee,  
And lo! He lives forevermore.

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### VI.

#### LIFE IS GLORIOUS.

Two men looked out from their prison bars.  
One saw the mud, and the other the stars.

"Thy soul shall be bound in the bundle of life with Jehovah thy God." 1 Sam. 25: 29.

Too often our harps are left hanging on the willows and our tongues forget to sing the songs of Zion. The glory side of life is crowded out of view by the ever-present and incessantly self-assertive material side. In our eagerness for the things that are seen we are blind to the great Eternal and Unseen with its glorious visions and boundless possibilities. The pomps and pageants of a king's coronation form the acme of human glory—but how hollow and trivial they are when tested by the standard of eternity. How the glory fades from the tinsel and the sparkle dies out of the diamond in the light of that city where they need neither sun nor moon, but whose lamp is the Lamb.

Is it a wonderful thing to be born to the purple and inherit a crown and a sceptre? Still do I show thee a more wonderful thing.

## **What is your Life?**

Is it glory to have an empire's might at one's command? What say you then to the power of an Almighty God?

Does it make the heart beat faster to know that millions are ready to die in one's defence? What then of Jesus, God's Only Son, who died to save us?

If it is glorious to have thousands working for you, what do you say of the God who made the heavens, working in you to will and to do of His good pleasure?

Life is surely glorious, glorious with a glory that never shone on land or sea.

This is what God's Holy Spirit says about life, and He should know.

In the letter to the Romans He says: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God these are the sons of God, . . . if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ."

Sons of God, and joint heirs with Christ!

What a vision! Lay aside these pages and ask the Master to make real to your soul at least a little fragment of this great truth. But let us not spoil it with comments.

Then He says: "To them that love God all things work together for good," for He foreordained us "to

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be conformed to the image of His Son," and "if God is for us, who is against us?"

Is this not glorious, more glorious than all that earth can give?

A son, an heir, a joint heir, all things working for our good, our destiny, the image of Jesus, the Almighty God for us.

And then listen to the message to Corinth: "We are God's fellow-workers, God's tilled land, God's building."

"All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

"Your body is a temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you."

"And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

"We all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, and transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

To the Philippians he wrote: "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."

"For it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

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**"My God shall supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."**

**To the Colossians: "For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God."**

**"The blood of His Son Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."**

**And now listen, and oh, may He who inspired the words inspire your heart, my brother, and burn these words into your soul:**

**"To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."**  
**Rev. 2: 7.**

**"To him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it."** **Rev. 2: 17.**

**"He shall be arrayed in white garments, and I will in no wise blot out his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and His angels."** **Rev. 3: 5.**

**"I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out hence no more, and I will write upon him the name of My God, and Mine own new Name."** **Rev. 3: 12.**

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**"I will give him to sit down with Me in My throne."**  
Rev. 3: 21.

**"And the Lamb shall overcome, for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and they shall also overcome that are with Him."** Rev. 17: 14.

**"Therefore are they before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His temple, and He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun strike upon them nor any heat; for the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall be their Shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life; and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."** Rev. 7: 14-17.

**"And death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more."** Rev. 21: 4.

**"And there shall be no curse any more; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein; and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever."** Rev. 22: 4, 5.

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**"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the waters of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God and he shall be My son." Rev. 21:6, 7.**

**Glory to God, brother; Heaven's just ahead.  
One word more. What is YOUR life?**



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